

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
OMB-01 DHA-02 AID-05 IO-13 SSM-03 /080 W
-----280645Z 081204 /21

R 271018Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4170
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USINT BAGHDAD
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2584

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR SY LE US
SUBJ: COMMENTS OF GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCH ON SITUATION IN
LEBANON

REF: DAMASCUS 3070

1. EMBASSY HAS FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON VIEWS OF GREEK ORTHODOX
PATRIARCH ELIAS IV, REPORTED REFTEL, CONCERNING SITUATION IN
LEBANON.

2. EXTREMIST ATTITUDE OF KFUR FRONT. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT
KFUR FRONT HAS BEEN A THORN IN THE SIDE OF PRESIDENT SARKIS IN
HIS EFFORTS TO REUNIFY LEBANON. MARONITE LEADERS HAVE CONTINUED
THEIR EFFORTS TO DEVELOP SEPERATE INFRASTRUCTION FACILITIES IN
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THE CHRISTIAN AREA, SUCH AS THE AIRPORT AT HAMAT, THEY HAVE
TURNED THE QUESTION OF THE PRESIDENCY OF LEBANESE UNIVERSITY
INTO A MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE, AND THEY HAVE CRITICIZED
AND SOUGHT TO DELAY EVERY MOVE SARKIS HAS MADE TO
REORGANIZE THE LEBANESE ARMY AND GOVERNMENT. ON THE
OTHER HAND, KFUR FRONT HAS STRONGLY SUPPORTED PRESIDENT
SARKIS ON HIS INTERPRETATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORD AND HE

MAY FIND THEIR "INTRANSIGENCE" USEFUL ON THIS ISSUE. ALTHOUGH LEBANESE SUNNIS MAY BE OPPOSED TO SYRIAN DOMINATION OF LEBANON AS PATRIARCH BELIEVES, LEBANESE CHRISTIANS ARE CONVINCED THAT THE SUNNIS CANNOT BE TRUSTED AND THAT PAN-ARAB TENDENCIES, WHETHER BAATHI OR NASSERIST ARE NOT COMPLETELY DEAD IN WEST BEIRUT.

3. LIKELIHOOD OF MUSLIM BACKLASH. LEBANESE MUSLIMS (AND SOME CHRISTIANS) ARE DEEPLY DISTURBED BY KFUR FRONT ATTITUDES, WHICH SEEM TO MAKE SOME KIND OF PARTITION INEVITABLE, BUT WE SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES THAT THEY WILL "TAKE TO THE STREETS." LEBANESE MUSLIMS, PARTICULARLY SUNNIS, WERE CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE IN THE RECENT WAR, AND MOST OF THEM SAT ON THE FENCE OR TRIED TO. AT PRESENT, IN THE WAKE OF JUNBLATT'S ASSASSINATION, THEY APPEAR TOO WEAK, PASSIVE AND DISUNITED TO START ANY TROUBLE, PARTICULARLY WITH THE ASF FIRMLY ENTRENCHED IN BEIRUT.

4. SYRIAN/ADF OCCUPATION OF LEBANON. ALTHOUGH TAKIEDDIN AL-SULH MAY HAVE CONVINCED ELIAS IV THAT SYRIANS ARE CURRENTLY LEANING TOO HEAVILY ON MUSLIM/ LEFTIST AREAS OF LEBANON WHILE PERMITTING CHRISTIANS FREE REIN ON THEIR TURF, CHRISTIAN LEADERS WOULD CERTAINLY ARGUE THAT THE SITUATION IS JUST THE OPPOSITE. SOME CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE REMARKED THAT EVEN IN THE DARKEST DAYS OF THE WAR THEY DID NOT REPEAT NOT HAVE "FOREIGN TROOPS" IN ASHRAFIYAH OR MT. LEBANON, AS THEY DO NOW. RECENT INCIDENT AT BILLA ILLUSTRATES VERY CONFIDENTIAL

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FRAGILE RELATIONS BETWEEN LEBANESE CHRISTIANS AND ADF SOLDIERS. ON OTHER HAND, IT IS OUR GENERAL IMPRESSION THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN LEBANESE MUSLIMS AND LEFTISTS AND SYRIAN ADF FORCES HAVE BEEN IMPROVING, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE DEPARTURE OF RAYMOND EDDE FOR PARIS AND THE ASSASSINATION OF KAMAL JUNBLATT.

5. CREATION OF A NEW POLITICAL FRONT. PRESIDENT SARKIS IS BEING INCREASINGLY CRITICIZED FOR NOT TAKING MORE DRAMATIC ACTION TO CREATE A NEW POLITICAL FRONT WHICH MIGHT WIN SUPPORT FROM ALL CONFESSIONAL GROUPS. PERHAPS IN RESPONSE TO THIS CRITICISMS THERE ARE NOW RUMORS THAT HE INTENDS TO ASSERT MORE FORCEFUL POLITICAL LEADERSHIP "NEXT MONTH." IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, ONLY SARKIS, AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, HAS THE PRESTIGE AND POSITION ABOVE THE BATTLE WHICH MIGHT MAKE SUCH AN INITIATIVE SUCCESSFUL. WE HAVE, AS AMBASSADOR MURPHY POINTED OUT, BEEN SEEKING TO DISCOURAGE MARONITE

TENDENCIES TOWARD PARTITION AND WHEN AND IF SARKIS DECIDES
TO MOVE, WE BELIEVE THE USG SHOULD CONTINUE TO SEEK
APPROPRIATE WAYS TO SUPPORT HIS EFFORTS. THE PATRIARCH'S
IMPLIED ADVICE THAT USG SHOULD STIMULATE THE
ORGANIZATION OF A NEW POLITICAL MOVEMENT IS SYMPTOMATIC
OF THE WIDESPREAD BELIEF HERE THAT ONLY THE UNITED
STATES CAN SAVE LEBANON.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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Image Path:
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 DAMASCUS 3070
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Date: 03-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2347433
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: COMMENTS OF GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCH ON SITUATION IN LEBANON
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SY, LE, US, KFUR FRONT, (ELIAS IV)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2b71e888-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009